

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting Minutes
June 9, 2021, 8 am – 9:30 am
Virtual Meeting Minute Taker: Debby Galef

Members present: Ilana Bebchick, Leah Beckett, Catrina Damrell, Shirley Elliot, Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Martha Henry, Sakiko Isomichi, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, Lindsey Levine, Scott MacGrath, Janet Mosley, Audrey Ng, Richard Nurse, Diane Roseman, Meera Singh, Quinten Steenhuis, Mary Verhage, Suzanne Wong

Members absent: Holden Cookson, Laura Nichols, Kristen Watkins

Staff Present: Mike Orr

Public present: Judy Nathans, Helen Snively

1. Housekeeping

The May minutes were approved.

2. City Updates

We're now three weeks into the return of food scraps collection. The numbers are down 10% - 20% from pre-pandemic times. The drop-off sites are still being used. The new system is much better now than before.

Scott and Sakiko have been doing an audit of currently used trash bin sizes. They're also encouraging composting and giving out yard waste stickers.

Trash tonnage went up substantially last year: 17.94 lbs./HH in 2020 vs. 15.55 lbs./HH in 2019. Small business composting program should help.

This month (June) will be benchmark. More back to normal.

Susy shared graph of MIT waste stream. Would be good for city to have such a chart.

3. Discussion of letter to Commissioner

City Council committee hearing on June 9, Debby G. to speak on behalf of RAC.

Residents will not be required to receive standardized bins.

Concern about 35 gallon size not working for larger buildings. Larger size needed for multi-families who share.

Earlier audit showed similar needs regarding size.

Letter approved and sent to Commissioner.

We need to figure out how to handle overflow at busy times of the year.

Also how to handle discussions regarding AD vs. composting, as some remain unconvinced.

4. Subcommittees

Analytics: Sakiko reported that the survey has been drafted and a link was shared with the whole RAC. The purpose is to improve and enhance food waste reduction.

Food Waste: Sent proposed questions for survey. Currently struggling with how best to promote newsletter. There's already a connection to the Cambridge Health Alliance. Suggestion to post on Buy Nothing Facebook pages. Or possible FB groups devoted to cooking? Shirley working on promoting through church. Meeting scheduled for July.

Reuse: Waiting to see if list can be appended to Get Rid of it Right. Also looking for other means, outlets for sharing. Mike will send list out to RAC.

5. Announcements

Rob - Maybe a Fix-It clinic this fall at the library?

Richard: When making plastic film a "batch" can be added to make polyethylene and polypropylene degrade. He's researching this process for his company. www.polymateria.com

RAC tables at farmers markets?

Next hazardous waste day is Saturday June 12.

Mike to send out doodle for summer social.

Rob: MassRecycle Product Stewardship Council meeting on June 15. Need to be MassRecycle member to participate. Want as many municipalities in MA as possible to pass EPR acts.

Draft language on MassRecycle website.

Probably no facility tours until September.

6. Action Items

Respond to doodle.

Contact Camilla if interested in tabling.

Spread the word (post on networks).

7. Public Comment

None

8. Chat

From Quinten Steenhuis (he/his) to Everyone: 08:24 AM

What about clarifying "35 gallons per household"

From Judith Nathans to Everyone: 08:25 AM

Small property owners who manage their buildings prefer putting out less containers, therefore 65 gallon is preferred.

From Sakiko Isomichi to Everyone: 08:26 AM

Add: with some exceptions such as large buildings

From Debby Knight to Everyone: 08:27 AM

with appropriate adaptations for multi-family buildings

From Shirley Elliott to Everyone: 08:27 AM

"35 gal per household with accommodations for multi family units"?

From Me to Susy Jones: (Privately) 08:31 AM

We are technically supposed to move on at 8:35, just a heads up

From Susy Jones to Me: (Privately) 08:31 AM

ok thanks! i'll try to move us forward

From Scott Macgrath to Everyone: 08:32 AM

Quick edit: Can you change "35-gallon size" to "35-gallon bin"?

From Debby Knight to Everyone: 08:33 AM

What's the timeline for purchasing these bins? Is it likely that Owen would meet with us again before that and we could have a more in-depth discussion at that point?

From Janet to Everyone: 08:37 AM

I think this is a great summary! Thanks for putting it together!

From Catrina Damrell to Everyone: 08:40 AM

Thank you, Debby, for volunteering to comment!

From Judith Nathans to Everyone: 08:40 AM

Note that speakers have 3 minutes if less than 20 people have signed up.

From Sakiko Isomichi to Everyone: 08:48 AM

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nEG8YkJfF5Or58Wd8iT3ZyLkNPqWs_Qe7NZHdKt49L8/edit

From Susy Jones to Everyone: 08:54 AM

The letter to Commissioner Owen has been submitted. Thanks all!

From Sakiko Isomichi to Everyone: 08:54 AM

Thanks Susy!

From Rob Gogan to Everyone: 08:54 AM

Great news—thanks Susy!

From Sakiko Isomichi to Everyone: 08:55 AM

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nEG8YkJfF5Or58Wd8iT3ZyLkNPqWs_Qe7NZHdKt49L8/edit

From Rob Gogan to Everyone: 08:56 AM

Thanks Sakiko & crew!

From Sakiko Isomichi to Everyone: 09:00 AM

Thank you all! Have a nice summer!

From Rob Gogan to Everyone: 09:01 AM

Keep up the good work Shirley!

From Shirley Elliott to Everyone: 09:02 AM

thanks Rob! It's thanks to a great team! 

From Meera Singh to Everyone: 09:03 AM

Mike, I get the recycling newsletter in my email but how do I get the link to share?

From MICHAEL ORR to Everyone: 09:05 AM

www.CambridgeMA.Gov/Subscribe

Sign up for Recycling, Trash, Compost newsletter

From Meera Singh to Everyone: 09:06 AM

Thank you!

From MICHAEL ORR to Everyone: 09:07 AM

2019: 15.55

2020: 17.94

From Diane Roseman to Everyone: 09:07 AM

wow

From Susy Jones to Everyone: 09:07 AM

Makes sense with Covid.

From Ilana Bebchick to Everyone: 09:08 AM

Also, Goodwill locations were closed for much of the pandemic.

From Helen Snively to Everyone: 09:09 AM

good point, Ilana.. lots of people jsut put stuff in trash as they clean out!

From Rob Gogan to Everyone: 09:09 AM

Also many employees and students were working and studying from home. Business and school trash probably went way down in 2020. Do you have figures on City Hall's trash for instance?

From Debby Knight to Everyone: 09:10 AM

Lots of people switched to online grocery deliveries as well as food takeout

From Diane Roseman to Everyone: 09:10 AM

There was so much worry over touching things as well, at least in the first part of the pandemic--no grabbing things off of the street. So much stuff just trashed

From Helen Snively to Everyone: 09:11 AM

idea to bump up residential composting: signs at coffee shops, etc? Hey, folks.. we're composting here, are you doing it at home? City makes it easy.. do it... or something like that.

From Richard Nurse to Everyone: 09:11 AM

My apologies. www.polymateria.com is worth looking at for a really interesting development in degradable plastics.

From Meera Singh to Everyone: 09:11 AM

I would like to request all to please share info about the recycling center in their n'hood groups and amongst friends - too much scrap metal stuff in the trash.

Share regularly/periodically, I mean.

From Shirley Elliott to Everyone: 09:12 AM

Thanks, everyone! Have a great summer!

From Helen Snively to Everyone: 09:12 AM

good point, Diane.. less trash picking! :)

From Me to Everyone: 09:17 AM

Reposting here: www.polymateria.com

From Meera Singh to Everyone: 09:18 AM

HHH Waste Day is June 12 - pls share this also with your neighborhood groups

From Debby Knight to Everyone: 09:19 AM

I need to start teaching - hope everyone has a great summer! See you in September if not sooner.

From MICHAEL ORR to Everyone: 09:21 AM

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/Services/householdhazardouswastedisposal>

From Meera Singh to Everyone: 09:21 AM

I find the ZW Cambridge app for my phone v helpful - pls consider downloading if you don't already have it -it even sends reminders for recycling events

From Helen Snively to Everyone: 09:22 AM

oh, an outdoors RAC gathering.. yay! and yes, rain dae.. ;)

From Richard Nurse to Everyone: 09:22 AM

I'm OK with social a gathering.

From Suzanne Wong to Everyone: 09:29 AM

Thanks everyone- I have to leave for another meeting.

From Susy Jones to Everyone: 09:29 AM

Thanks everyone for getting through a tough year! Way to go! Hope everyone finds some relaxation this summer.